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THE DUTCH ELM DISEASE SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES  
AT THE CLOSE OF 1938

SINCE the discovery of the Dutch elm disease in the United States in 1929, small infected spots have been found in Ohio, Indiana, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and eastern Connecticut, and a large infected area 50 to 60 miles in radius out from and including New York City. Eradication of the disease has been accomplished or is proceeding satisfactorily in all except the New York area. There the work is dragging. This is disturbing, because on the outcome of that part of the undertaking depends the future of America's elms. In order to get an independent, close-up view of the situation a visit was made to the New York area, September 15-17, 1938, by myself and Dr. J. S. Boyce, Professor of Forest Pathology, Yale University. We examined the maps and records of the Dutch Elm Disease Eradication Offices, interviewed Federal and State officials in charge and looked over a few critical parts of the field. Important findings are summarized below.

**II. Present status of the Dutch Elm Disease in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.**

In the southwestern part of CONNECTICUT where the disease has been severe, there now appears to be some reduction as a result of intensive eradication and sanitation. Elsewhere there is no significant extension; but there are new scattered cases, in many instances miles removed from one another. The explanation of these cases is not clear, but they may be accounted for in part by the chance flight of Scolytus beetles, and in part by the local transfer of affected elm wood. It would seem that State restrictions governing the maintenance of wood piles containing elm logs and the transportation of unpeeled elm wood could be improved; or existing restrictions more rigorously enforced. It is incongruous that we should exclude foreign wood for fear of infection and, at the same time, not restrict local transportation.

In a considerable part of the infected region in NEW YORK STATE outstanding progress has been made in the eradication of the Dutch elm disease.

This applies particularly to Westchester County and the area to the south. For example, in Greater New York City, where there were 1264 cases in 1933-34, only 55 cases were found in 1938. There was a reduction of more than 25% in the area from White Plains southward in 1937, and there will be a further drop of about 35% in 1938 as compared with 1937. The success in New York State is in part explained by the efficient cooperation extended by the State. Thus, the State scouts give a normal week's work; the personnel is fairly continuous from year to year; each group of scouts operates in its own district year after year; these scouts have become fully acquainted with the sections in which they work; moreover, they are picked men.

One disturbing feature in New York State is the discovery during the past summer of the disease in Dutchess County. This will mean an extension of effort but probably not to such an extent as to threaten the success of the eradication program.

There has been no significant spread of the disease in NEW JERSEY in 1938 as compared with 1937. Control of further spread in New Jersey will be facilitated by the fact that the infected area is now bounded by natural barriers. In some parts there has been a considerable reduction in the amount of the disease as a result of eradication and sanitation. The large increase reported for New Jersey this year is related to silvicide operations. In certain regions half a million elms were recently killed by a silvicide process applied for the purpose of eliminating areas in which scouting is difficult and the elms of little value. The resulting dead trees have unexpectedly served as breeding places for *Scolytus*. It is around these areas that the increase in the disease has occurred. For example, adjacent to a silvicide area in the town of Clinton the number of diseased elms this year is 225 as compared with 4 in 1937; in Montgomery, 75 as compared with one in 1937; in Hopewell to Hillsborough, 2160 as compared with 23 in 1937. These occurrences, while distressing, are probably not alarming. The silvicide areas will now be out of the picture. The further breeding of *Scolytus* in them will cease. The number of affected elms adjacent to them will drop off sharply.

## II. Disabilities that should be removed.

1. Funds have not been available early enough in the year nor with sufficient continuity. The result this year has been that systematic scouting was not possible before July 9. June is the best month for scouting and it should be begun in the latter part of May.

2. As a result of irregularity and uncertainty with respect to the availability of funds, the field forces have again and again been demoralized at critical periods.

3. The quality of the field forces, welfare recipients, has been distinctly inferior for scouting purposes. This applies to a considerable proportion of the foremen and a large percentage of the men under them.

4. Under the present system the scouting forces have had to be continually reorganized; hence much effort has been sacrificed because of the loss of experienced men and the necessity of giving time during the season to instruction of their replacements.





**PLATE XV**  
A stately American elm.

5. As business improves the quality of available men drawn from welfare agencies and assigned to the eradication project has been and will be continuously on the down grade.

6. Under the present set-up there are complications with respect to the transfer of men from one town to another. In other words, it is sometimes impossible either to secure or place men where they are needed.

7. The work hours are too short at present; men on welfare are working about 113 hours a month instead of about the 190 hours which would prevail under normal conditions of employment.

8. Most of the men now employed are city men. They generally dislike the work and many of them are afraid and helpless in wooded tracts.

9. Many estate owners have become disgusted with the kind of men that are being sent in to scout and work on their properties and do not want them on their grounds.

10. These disabilities react on the spirit of the responsible officers and, in consequence, they feel that, if continued, the possibility of eradication is threatened or at least indefinitely postponed.

### III. Comments.

1. Scouting should be organized and carried on without relation to welfare work.

2. The employment of W.P.A. workers should be restricted mainly to the sanitation part of the program.

3. Special attention should be given to the outer limits of the Dutch elm disease area in the states of New York and Connecticut so as to prevent the spread of the disease into contiguous regions in which the elm population is dense and important. A much further spread will spell doom to America's elms.

4. In formulating the program for 1939, the damage done to elms within the infected areas by the hurricane of September 21 will have to be taken into consideration.

As a result of the fear aroused by the Dutch elm disease situation in America, some people have come to question the advisability of planting elms. The answer, especially for the eastern part of the country, is reached through an appraisal of the prospect that the disease will be eliminated. In my judgment we can safely continue to plant elms. It is unthinkable, in view of the demonstrated possibilities of success in eradication, that the American people will abandon efforts to save one of the finest gifts of Nature. Given the opportunity, I still think we can preserve our elms. But provision for that opportunity rests immediately on Federal and State governments, and primarily on the insistence brought to bear by the public on those who represent them in those governments. The cost to try to save our elms is relatively small. On the other hand, if we let them go, the costs will be greater to this generation, and a noble heritage will no longer be ours to pass on to succeeding generations. Everyone can help at the moment by urgent spoken or written words, and now is the critical time for action.

J. H. FAULL